

First Congressional District; and Prime Minister
Atal Behari Vajpayee of India.

Statement on the Deaths of United Nations Refugee Workers in Indonesia and in Guinea

September 25, 2000

I join all Americans in mourning the recent deaths of United Nations refugee workers in Indonesia and in Guinea.

On September 6 in West Timor, three staff members of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were brutally murdered by a rampaging local militia. One of those killed was an American, Carlos Caceres-Collazo, who was still new to the cause of helping refugees and displaced persons, but already dedicated to it, even in conditions of great danger and hardship.

Two weeks later, in the West African country of Guinea, another UNHCR staff member was killed, and a colleague abducted, by an unidentified armed group. I extend my condolences to

their families and to UNHCR, which has been shocked by these tragedies. We hope that the abducted employee will be returned to safety.

These international civil servants were willing to take enormous risks and endure great hardship to protect and assist the most vulnerable refugees, displaced and war-affected people. Humanitarian workers operate on the principles of neutrality and impartiality, and it is tragic that they so frequently become the victims of willful violence themselves. We must work to end the culture of impunity that allows such violence to flourish and dedicate ourselves to strengthening the protection of those whose mission is to help their fellow human beings.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the “Medicine Equity and Drug Safety Act of 2000”

September 25, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

In your letter, you outlined a number of health care issues that you indicated could be resolved before Congress adjourns. I want to be equally clear about my priorities and hopes for progress this fall. As the days dwindle in this session of Congress, I am seriously concerned about the lack of movement on some of our most important issues. I am, however, encouraged to learn from your letter that the Republican leadership is now committed to providing Americans with access to prescription drugs available at lower cost from other countries.

As you know, our people are growing more and more concerned that the pharmaceutical industry often sells the same drugs for a much higher price in the United States than it does in other countries, even when those drugs are

manufactured here at home. This forces some of our most vulnerable citizens, including seniors and people with disabilities, to pay the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. This is simply unacceptable.

That is why I support the “Medicine Equity and Drug Safety Act of 2000,” which the Senate passed by an overwhelming vote of 74 to 21. This important legislation would give Americans access to quality medications at the lower prices paid by citizens in other nations. The Senate bill, sponsored by Senators Jeffords, Wellstone, Dorgan and others, would allow wholesalers and pharmacists to import FDA-approved prescription drugs and would establish a new safety system intended to track these imports and test them for authenticity and degradation. Before this provision could take effect, the Secretary